

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7509
INFO SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USMISSION USNATO
SECNAV WASHDC
SECAF WASHDC
DIA WASHDC
CJCS WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BELGRADE 5724

FOR ASSISTANT SECY VEST FROM AMBASSADOR EAGLEBURGER

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: OVIP (LJUBICIC), PFOR
SUBJ: VISIT OF YUGOSLAV DEFENSE MINISTER LJUBICIC

REF: A) DAO MESSAGE 141550Z JUL 78 CITE 0396 B) 77 BELGRADE 6762

1. I KNOW BOTH STATE AND DOD RECOGNIZE THE KEY ROLE
YUGOSLAV MOD LJUBICIC PLAYS HERE AND THE CONSEQUENT
IMPORTANCE OF HIS VISIT IN LATE SEPTEMBER. PERHAPS IT HAS
ALREADY OCCURRED TO DOD THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO EXPAND
LJUBICIC'S EXPOSURE TO INCLUDE SENIOR US OFFICIALS IN STATE
AND PERHAPS THE WHITE HOUSE AS WELL. I HOPE THIS CAN BE
ARRANGED. A MEETING WITH SECRETARY VANCE (OR IN HIS ABSENCE
DEPUTY SECTY CHRISTOPHER) WOULD BE VERY USEFUL. GIVEN VICE
PRESIDENT MONDALE'S PERSONAL INTEREST IN YUGOSLAVIA, WHICH
IS WELL KNOWN AND APPRECIATED HERE, I HOPE HE WOULD ALSO
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BE ABLE TO MEET WITH LJUBICIC. PROVIDED BELOW IS SOME
AMMUNITION FOR USE IN ARGUING THE CASE.

2. LJUBICIC'S RETURN VISIT TO SECRETARY BROWN OFFERS US A
UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPOSE LJUBICIC TO SENIOR USG
OFFICIALS, EXPAND US-YUGOSLAV MILITARY COOPERATION, AND TO
CONSOLIDATE THE FAVORABLE BUT STILL FRAGILE POLITICAL AND

MILITARY RELATIONSHIPS WE HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTING TO BUILD. ASIDE FROM TITO, LJUBICIC HAS THE DETERMINING VOICE IN SETTING YUGOSLAV DEFENSE POLICIES, PRIORITIES, AND DIRECTIONS. HE ENJOYS TITO'S FULL CONFIDENCE AND, ALTHOUGH APPARENTLY (OR PERHAPS I SHOULD SAY, HOPEFULLY) LACKING PERSONAL POLITICAL AMBITION, SEEMS CERTAIN TO HAVE A KEY ROLE IN ENSURING AN ORDERLY SUCCESSION TO TITO.

3. WE PROVIDED OUR BEST JUDGMENT ON LJUBICIC'S PERSONALITY IN OUR MESSAGE PRIOR TO SECY BROWN'S VISIT LAST OCTOBER (REF B). CLEARLY, SINCE WORLD WAR II DAYS, WHEN HE COMMANDED THE COMPANY GUARDING TITO'S PARTISAN HEADQUARTERS, LJUBICIC HAS GIVEN IMPORTANT AND PERHAPS VITAL SUPPORT TO TITO DURING CRITICAL MOMENTS. IN 1966, WHEN TITO OUSTED SECURITY CHIEF AND THEN HEIR APPARENT RANKOVIC, LJUBICIC PROVIDED ESSENTIAL LOYALTY AND SUPPORT AS COMMANDER OF THE BELGRADE ARMY DISTRICT. IN 1968, IN THE WAKE OF THE CZECH INVASION AND RENEWED CONCERN ABOUT DETERRING POSSIBLE SOVIET MILITARY MOVES AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA, HE MOVED DECISIVELY TO INITIATE THE CONCEPT OF ALL PEOPLE'S TERRITORIAL DEFENSE. AND IN 1971-72 LJUBICIC GAVE IMPORTANT BACKING TO TITO DURING THE "NATIONALIST CRISIS."

4. NOW, AS YUGOSLAVIA MOVES TOWARD THE POST TITO ERA, LJUBICIC'S GREATEST SERVICE TO TITO MAY BE IN HELPING PRESERVE HIS LEGACY AND A STRONG, INDEPENDENT YUGOSLAVIA. CONFIDENTIAL

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AS THE COUNTRY'S RANKING MILITARY FIGURE, LJUBICIC DOMINATES AN INSTITUTION WHOSE INCREASING POLITICAL INFLUENCE IS WIDELY AND EXPLICITLY ACKNOWLEDGED; WHOSE ROLE AS A UNIFYING FORCE IN AN ETHNICALLY DIVERSE AND DECENTRALIZED YUGOSLAV FEDERATION IS VITAL; AND WHOSE STANCE IN THE POST TITO ERA WILL CRITICALLY AFFECT YUGOSLAVIA'S CONTINUED INTEREST IN EXPANDED RELATIONS WITH THE US AS WELL AS ITS ABILITY TO RESIST SOVIET ATTEMPTS TO DRAW YUGOSLAVIA CLOSER TO MOSCOW.

5. AS TO SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES, LJUBICIC'S VISIT OFFERS US AN OPPORTUNITY TO:

A) REAFFIRM PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY THE IMPORTANCE WE ATTACH TO YUGOSLAVIA AND OUR CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR ITS INDEPENDENCE.

B) UNDERLINE OUR INTEREST IN AND COMMITMENT TO BUILDING A LONG TERM COOPERATIVE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP, IN MILITARY AS WELL AS OTHER FIELDS. IN THIS REGARD, THERE ARE ELEMENTS IN THE YUGOSLAV MILITARY AND GOVERNMENT WHO HAVE OPPOSED (AND PERHAPS STILL OPPOSE) EXPANDED MILITARY RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES BECAUSE OF IDEOLOGICAL BAGGAGE, DEEP-

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SEATED SUSPICIONS ABOUT US MOTIVES AND INTENTIONS, OR
GENUINE CONCERN THAT THE US WOULD NOT BE A RELIABLE SUPPLIER
OF ARMS AND EQUIPMENT OVER THE LONGER RUN. (WITH REGARD TO
THIS QUESTION OF RELIABILITY WE NEED TO ADMIT, AT LEAST TO
OURSELVES, THAT THE YUGOSLVS HAVE SOME OBJECTIVE REASONS
FOR THINKING AS THEY DO.) OVERCOMING THESE PERCEPTIONS
AND IMPRESSING UPON LJUBICIC OUR INTENTION TO BUILD A LONG
TERM RELATIONSHIP MUST THUS BE A MAJOR OBJECTIVE OF THIS
VISIT, EMPHASIZING AT THE SAME TIME THAT THE YUGOSLAVS MUST
CONTRIBUTE TO THIS PROCESS THROUGH THEIR POLICIES AND THEIR
DEALINGS WITH OUR MILITARY.
C) AFFIRM OUR SUPPORT FOR THE JOINT MILITARY WORKING
GROUP, AS A MECHANISM FOR FACILITATING COOPERATION IN THE
MILITARY FIELD.
D) BE PREPARED TO RESPOND, AT LEAST IN A PRELIMINARY

FASHION, TO A POSSIBLE YUGOSLAV REQUEST FOR FMS CREDITS.
THE YUGOSLAV UNTIL NOW HAVE ACCEPTED WITHOUT COMPLAINT
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OUR EARLIER DECISION NOT TO OFFER CREDIT SALES, BUT
FINANCIAL AND MILITARY PROCUREMENT PRESSURES HAVE
APPARENTLY FORCED A RECONSIDERATION; THEY NOW TELL US
LJUBICIC MAY RAISE QUESTION OF FMS CREDITS DURING HIS VISIT.
E) ASSURE LJUBICIC THAT US, WHILE IT MAY NOT ALWAYS BE
ABLE TO APPROVE EVERY YUGOSLAV REQUEST FOR HIGH TECHNOLOGY
ITEMS, WILL TRY TO BE AS FORTHCOMING AS POSSIBLE. IN THIS
REGARD, THE YUGOSLAVS HAVE EXPRESSED LIVELY INTEREST IN A
PRATT AND WHITNEY ENGINE FOR A PROJECTED, YUGOSLAV BUILT,
MULTIPURPOSE SUPERSONIC JET. WE HAVE PASSED TECHNICAL DATA
ON THE P AND W 414 MODEL ENGINE TO THE YUGOSLAVS AND HAVE TOLD
THEM THE US WOULD APPROVE SUCH A SALE. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE
NEVER DISCUSSED POSSIBILITY OF A CORPODUCTION OR LICENSING
ARRANGEMENT WITH YUGOSLVS, WE SUSPECT THEY MAY BE TOYING
WITH THE IDEA. THEY WILL NOT BE IN A POSITION TO MAKE ANY
DICISION ON THIS MATTER, LET ALONE MAKE A FORMAL REQUEST,
FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, SO WE WILL NOT BE CALLED ON TO TAKE
A POSITION ON THIS QUESTION FOR SOME TIME. NEVERTHELESS,
IT IS POSSIBLE THAT LJUBICIC MAY BROACH THE SUBJECT, AND
WE SHOULD IN THAT EVENT BE PREPARED WITH A CONSIDERED
RESPONSE.

6. IN SHORT, THE LJUBICIC VISIT CAN MAKE AN IMPORTANT
CONTRIBUTION TO ATTEMPTS TO BUILD A LONG TERM AND COOPERATIVE
RELATIONSHIP WITH YUGOSLAVIA AND IT IS THUS VERY MUCH IN OUR
INTEREST FOR LJUBICIC TO SEE SENIOR USG OFFICIALS FROM STATE
AND THE WHITE HOUSE AS WELL AS FROM THE PENTAGON.

7. I ALSO RECOMMEND THAT OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE IN BELGRADE,
COLONEL WILLIAM ROCHE, BE ASSIGEND TO ESCORT LJUBICIC, AND
TRUST THIS HAS ALREADY OCCURRED TO DOD.
EAGLEBURGER

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